Work to replace old copper wire led to the FAA’s ground stop

A view of an information board at the Chicago O’Hare International Airport, filled with waiting passengers on November 13, 2026. | Anadolu via Getty Images

At a press conference today, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said that Friday’s nationwide ground stop ordered by the FAA was related to work replacing outdated copper wire with a fiber optic line at a “remote FAA facility.” The secretary said that this was “routine maintenance,” rather than the result of a major modernization effort. He told reporters that it was “such an old wire that it was being discontinued, meaning that line was going to get shut down,” necessitating the upgrade.

What wasn’t clear, according to Secretary Duffy, was the root cause of the problem. He said that it could have been faulty hardware, a misconfigured rout …

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